

# WIT & HUMOUR

## (A TEA PARTY)

**About the Author:** Ruth Praver Jhabvala, (7 May 1927 – 3 April 2013) was a German-born British and American Booker prize winning novelist, short story writer and two-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter. She lived in India for 24 years from 1951, then moved to New York in 1975 and lived there until her death in 2013.

**Introduction:** Humour is the quality that makes someone or something amusing or funny and wit is the ability to use words in a clever and amusing way. In this story, it is described how often an ordinary situation becomes so comic that brings uncontrollable laughter. This story is based on such a situation from the novel “The House Holder” authored by Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

**Indu and Prem Getting Ready to the Party:** In this story, young couple Prem and Indu were invited to Mr.Khanna’s tea party where the college staff members gathering for. Indu was very happy to go as she wanted to escape from the household chores, so she spent a long time dressing herself. She wore lilac-colored silk sari with big flowers and leaves stitched with imitation pearls. She put on red shoes with high soles. She also wore a heavy gold necklace, long earrings and a dozen gold bangles. She oiled her hair and smoothened

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it. Then she wound her hair round with a fresh chain of jasmine. She applied the red mark on forehead and little lipstick on her lips. She looked grand. Prem was wearing his best shirt and trousers, and felt proud as they walked together to the college. They were obviously two people dressed up in their best clothes. He asked his wife Indu to behave herself with the requisite decorum and in a way that she was well educated.

**Mr & Mrs Khanna:** Mr.Khanna is the Principal of Khanna Private College. Mr and Mrs.Khanna invite all the lecturers who are working in their college as a part of social gathering. The party was arranged in the living room of Mr.Khanna on the first floor of the college. Members of the staff with their wives, all dressed up in their best, were seated in a prearranged circles of chairs. Mr.Khanna was standing in the center and there was a polite titter of laughter in response. Among all the women in the tea party, Mrs.Khanna, bossy wife of Mr.Khanna, wore the most gorgeous clothes. Mr.Khanna addressed the guests that the refreshment and revival of mind and body will enable the teachers to resume their duties with new vigor and relaxation was like cool shower-bath on a hot day. Meanwhile, dishes – fritters, samosas and sweetmeats prepared by Mrs.Khanna served to each guest.

**Mr.Chadda & Women at the Tea Party:** Mr.Chadda was a resourceful but cantankerous member of the staff. He said that the society of

*ladies had a softening effect and it was like a heroes of taking a break in their battles to have their wounds dressed by their wives and be comforted. He added that gathering like this would promote goodwill and fellowship. The ladies remain unmoved to the remarks of Mr.Chadda. They were all seated together in one half of the circle. They held themselves very stiff and looked very much aware both of their shining and new clothes, and of the opulent surroundings. Only Mrs.Khanna was at ease, in clothes more gorgeous than anyone else's.*

**The shock that Prem Gets:** *All the guests stared into space and chewed as delicately as they could. In due course, dishes of fritters, samosas and sweetmeats were served. When everyone had eaten the correct amount, the servant went around to collect the plates. Prem wiped his lips with handkerchief and he saw that she still had her plate with more sweetmeats on it. And these sweetmeats she was eating with the same concentration and relish. He felt very uneasy. His eyes stole round to Indu again. She was eating sweetmeat rather in a predatory manner and licking her fingers. When servant came to collect the plate of Indu, she had quickly taken two more large sweetmeats. It was evident to Prem that Indu was by this time quite lost to her surroundings. She was continually biting, chewing, flicking crumbs from her lips with her tongue. She seemed in a*

*trance of enjoyment. The ladies all sat with their hands in their laps. All of a sudden Mr.Chadda stands up and thanks Mr. & Mrs. Khanna for such a wonderful party. Everyone agrees with him. During his talk, Prem sees Indu eating a lot. By the end of Chadda's speech everyone starts moving home. Prem feels sorry and disappointed.*

**Prem's attempt to Save Situation:** *Prem didn't blame Indu for her behavior because he had heard that pregnant women had strange and uncontrollable desires. But he was terrified that others who did not know of this would notice. He wanted to give a sign to stop her but she was sitting too far away and too engrossed to meet his eye. Mrs.Khanna pointed at Indu and said to the servant in a whisper which everyone could hear that there is one plate left over there. Prem thought more about how he would like to explain the situation to Mrs.Khanna.*

**The Ending of the Story both funny and little sad:** *Mr.Khanna said that the tea party was over but Prem did not want it to be over. There is still remained so much to do. He wished desperately to make some contribution to the conversation and show everyone that he was intelligent and deep-thinking young man. But the guests were already leaving. Mr. Khanna stood at the door with his hands folded in an attitude of gracious hospitality. Prem wanted to call out 'stop'. He wanted to make them understand that Indu's odd behavior was due*

*to natural causes. But did not have the courage to call out and besides he could not really think of anything striking to say. So the ending of the story is both funny and little sad.*

# MOKSHAGUNAM VISVESWARAYA

**Introduction:** Sir Mokshagundam Visveswaraya, popularly known as Sir MV, was a man who excelled at many different fields. He was a notable Indian engineer, scholar, statesman and the Diwan of Mysore during 1912 to 1918. He was a recipient of the Indian Republic's highest honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1955. Every year, 15 September is celebrated as Engineer's Day in India in his memory.

**Early Life and Beginnings:** Sir MV was born in Muddenahalli, a village in Karnataka, on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1860 to Srinavasa Sastry and Venkatalakshamma. He completed his high school education from Wesley Mission High School and his graduation from Central College – both in Bangalore. As he had no money to complete his BA, he found a family from Coorg to be their tutor. He was a very bright student. He went on to pursue a course in civil engineering in Pune, having received a scholarship by Mysore Government. While there, he was awarded the James Berkley Gold Medal for outstanding performance. He led a very simple life and was a strict vegetarian. As soon as the results were out, he got first rank in both LCE & ECE examination

and the Government of Bombay offered him the post of an Assistant Engineer at Nasik.

**The Block System of Irrigation – Solving the water problem in Nasik:** When he was 32 years old, a very difficult task was assigned to him where he was asked to find a way of supplying water from the river Sindhu to a town called Sukkur. The Block System of Irrigation, a scheme prepared by Visveswaraya, was a big achievement. The objective of the Block System of Irrigation was 'to distribute the benefits of an irrigation work over a large number of villages and to concentrate the irrigation in each village within blocks of specified limits and in selected soils and situations'. The irrigation system was a great success. This system could stop the wasteful of water in dams. Even British officers of those times were astonished by his dexterity and they were full of praises for the invention.

**Twin Cities Water Problem:** After working for the Government of Bombay, for a short period he opted to work for the Nizam of Hyderabad. He suggested flood relief measures for Hyderabad town, which was under constant threat of floods by Musi river. For flood control, he advised construction of two reservoir dams – one across the river Musi and other across its tributary Easi. He also advised to raise the banks of the river within the city and convert the area on either side into walks and gardens along the river front. He

had prepared a modern underground drainage scheme for the city, making use of drainage water for agriculture; to widen the road and demolish certain unhealthy areas and construct house for the poor. The dams constructed across the Moosi and Easi are known as Himayatsagar and Osmansagar respectively. These dams provide water to the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundarabad. The work was undertaken in 1913 and before the work was completed, he had become the Dewan of Mysore.

**Krishna Sagar Dam & Other Achievements:** Sir MV was the driving force behind the construction of many major dams and water supply schemes across the country. The famous Krishna Raja Sagar dam in Mysore is one of these. He supervised the construction of the KRS Dam across the Cauvery River from concept to inauguration. This dam created the biggest reservoir in Asia when it was built. The dam was conceived not only for the purpose of irrigation, but also for providing electricity to the Kolar goldfields. He advised 2000 more laborers where 10,000 had already been employed. Doctors were appointed to treat workers afflicted by malaria. He directed all the officials to camp at the spot to speed up the work, to look after the security and supervise the work in general. By facing all unexpected problems and difficulties with courage, he got the work completed well in time. Power was also supplied to Kolar goldfields

by July 1915. He was rightly called the "Father of modern Mysore state". The use of automatic sluice gates, an engineering innovation applied in many dams across the country, was Sir MV's idea.

**Sir MV's Clarion Call, Industrialize or Perish:**

Sir MV wanted to remove ignorance, poverty and sickness through Economic Conference. In fact, Economic Planning in India credit goes to Sir MV. He started agricultural schools and experimental farms. Handloom industry was started. A central government weaving factory was established to provide the weavers with latest designs and techniques in weaving. The State Bank of Mysore was founded in 1913 for financing the projects. Rice mills, oil mills, sugarcane crushing mills and power looms came up everywhere. Prior to 1916 sandalwood from Mysore was exported to France, Italy and Germany. He started sandal oil factory, soap factory, metals factory, chrome tanning factory and Bhadravathi Iron and Steel Works. He took voluntary retirement in 1918 at the age of 57.

**Sir MV's Attitude to Education:** Sir MV always believed in the values of education. As a Diwan of Mysore, he opened 6,500 new schools in a span of six years in Mysore State. He established the Maharani's College in Mysore where the first hostel for girls was opened. He also made arrangements for scholarship to intelligent students to go abroad for studies. Sri Jayachamaraja Polytechnic Institute of Bangalore

*came into existence with an amount of one hundred thousand rupees that the government owed him. He was considered a magician for so much in so short time. When he turned 100 years, the government of India honoured him by bringing out a stamp. He passed away on 14<sup>th</sup>, April 1962 at the age of 101.*